

SECTION I

▲ Investigator's Assurance ▲

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Title of Proposal An Exploration of Policies, Programs, and Practices in Middle Grades Education .
Proposed Duration of Project (months/years) 18 months Anticipated Start Date February 13, 2012
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Funding Agency _____ PIAF # _____

☒ Please note that data collection cannot begin until approval is granted by the HSRRC

INVESTIGATOR'S ASSURANCE

- A. I will promptly report changes in the proposed study and any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects, including adverse reactions, to the Human Subjects Review Committee. In case of DHHS supported activities, I will also report these problems to the Department of Health and Human Services (through the respective granting office).
- B. I assure that documentary evidence of informed consent will be retained for at least three years after the proposed study has been completed or discontinued.
- C. Since the Committee is obligated to review this activity at least on an annual basis, I will furnish it with a progress report no later than six weeks prior to the expiration of my project's approval.
- D. I, the undersigned, will be responsible for the ethical standards of this project, and for protecting the rights and welfare of the subjects.

Micki M. Caskey
Signature of Principal Investigator

1/23/12
Date

I have read and approved this proposal:

Susan Lenski
Department Head (PRINT)

S. J. Lenski
Signature

1-23-12
Date

☐ Masters Thesis ☐ Masters Project ☐ Doctoral Dissertation ☐ Special Project
approval date: _____

Dissertation/Thesis/Project Advisor (PRINT) Signature Date

Advisor's Campus Mail Code Advisor's E-mail Address

☒ Please complete and return this form, along with your HSRRC application, and copies to the HSRRC, Office of Research & Strategic Partnerships (RSP), Market Center Building, 6th floor, Portland State University, Phone: (503) 725-4288

An Exploration of Policies, Programs, and Practices in Middle Grades Education

I. Investigator's Assurance

(See attached form)

II. Project Title & Prospectus

Title: An Exploration of Policies, Programs, and Practices in Middle Grades Education

In the proposed study, I will explore the policies, programs, and practices in middle grades education. Typically, middle grades education consists of grades 5-9 and serves young adolescents—10-15 year-olds. To advance my understanding and develop a global perspective of middle grades education, I plan to investigate the policies, programs, and practices used by teacher educators in New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and the United States. For this study, teacher educators include principals, mentor teachers, and university faculty, who guide the education and professional development of teacher candidates (i.e., preservice teachers) and teachers (i.e., inservice teachers).

During the course of this exploratory study, I will visit with teacher educators (i.e., principals, mentor teachers, and university faculty) at selected schools and universities in New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and the United States to examine the educational policies and programs that support middle grades teacher and the teaching practices that meet the needs of young adolescents. During these school visits, I will (a) interview teacher educators, (b) observe educational activities (e.g., classroom sessions, meetings), and (c) collect artifacts (e.g., policy handbooks, programs of study, teaching schedules, curriculum frameworks, course syllabi, newsletters or other informational documents, school improvement plans). While visiting the schools, I will participate in both formal and informal teacher meetings to exchange ideas about middle grades education. I will also share requested information about the status of middle grades education in the United States with teacher educators in both formal and informal sessions.

Research questions that will guide this exploratory study are:

1. What principles guide the policies, programs, and practices in middle grades education?
2. How have educational policies been enacted in middle grades schools?
3. How do educational programs align with established tenets of the middle grades education (e.g., *This We Believe* [NMSA, 2010, *Turning Points* [CCAD, 1989])?
4. How do the teaching practices of middle grades teachers support the developmental needs of young adolescents?

References

- Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. (1989). *Turning points: Preparing American youth for the 21st century*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Corporation of New York.
- National Middle School Association. (2010). *This we believe: Keys to educating young adolescents*. Westerville, OH: Author.

III. Exemption Claim for Waiver of Review

The proposed exploratory study qualifies for a waiver of review because of the following exemptions:

- The research will be conducted in commonly accepted educational settings (i.e., middle grades schools and universities) involving normal educational practices. In this study, the normal educational practices include: (a) research on the programs and practices used by teachers to engage young adolescents in middle grades schools, and (b) research on the policies, programs, and practices in university programs that guide the education of teacher candidates (i.e., preservice teachers) and professional development of teachers (i.e., inservice teachers).
- The research will involve the use interview and observation procedures that safeguard the confidentiality of the participants. The participants will not be identified and the data will not be directly linked to the participants.
- The research will involve the collection or study of existing documents (e.g., policy handbooks, programs of study, teaching schedules, curriculum frameworks, course syllabi, newsletters or other informational documents, school improvement plans), which are publically available.

IV. Subject Recruitment

The subjects for this study will come from a group of teacher educators in New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and the United States. As noted, teacher educators include principals, mentor teachers, and university faculty members who guide the education and development of middle grades teachers.

The researcher is acquainted with teacher educators in New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and the United States. These teacher educators specialize in middle grades education and are members of the American Research Educational Research Association's Middle Level Special Interest Group and/or the Association of Middle Level Education. Due to the researcher's leadership roles in the aforementioned associations, she has established professional relationships with the teacher educators. The teacher educators have invited the researcher to visit their respective institutions.

When visiting each institution, the researcher will meet with teacher educators and describe the project. She will ask the teacher educators to participate in the study. Teacher educators who decide to participate will be asked to sign an Informed Consent letter and schedule a convenient time for an interview, observation, and/or collection of artifacts.

Principals: Principals from middle grades schools (e.g., Blockhouse Bay Intermediate School [New Zealand], Brisbane North Intermediate School [Australia], McNicoll Park Middle School [British Columbia], Robert Gray Middle School [United States]) will be invited to participate in the study.

Mentor Teachers: Teachers from middle grades schools (e.g., Blockhouse Bay Intermediate School [New Zealand], Brisbane North Intermediate School [Australia], McNicoll Park Middle School [British Columbia], Robert Gray Middle School [United States]) will be invited to participate in the study.

University Faculty Members: University faculty members from universities (e.g., University of Auckland [New Zealand], Queensland University of Technology [Australia], The University of British Columbia [British Columbia], George Fox University [United States]) will be invited to participate in the study.

V. Informed Consent

All participants will be adults of 18 years of age or more. Participants will be briefed about the intent of the study and receive an Informed Consent letter that outlines the expected activities. The researcher will explain that participation is completely voluntary. In signing a consent form, participants will indicate that they are giving the researcher permission to gather data from interviews, observations, and/or artifacts. The signed Informed Consent letter assures the participants that they have the option not to participate in the study and/or may withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. Participants choose their level of involvement in the study. They may participate in any one part, all parts, or any combination of parts of the study. (See attached Informed Consent letter.)

VI. First-Person Scenario

Principal: I met the researcher in my school office and learned about the study. I was given an Informed Consent letter that described the study and my role as participant. I agreed to be a participant, signed the Informed Consent letter, and returned it to the researcher at the end of the meeting. The researcher arranged a time to conduct an interview and to accompany me when observing in school classrooms. During the individual interview, the researcher asked questions, took notes, and recorded my responses. Next, she visited classrooms with me to observe teachers. Following the observations, the researcher and I met in my office to discuss our observations. Subsequently, I gave the researcher educational materials including the policy handbook, instructional schedule, and school improvement plan.

Mentor Teacher: I met the researcher at a school meeting and learned about the study. I was given an Informed Consent letter that described the study and my role as participant. I agreed to be a participant, signed the Informed Consent letter, and returned it to the researcher at the end of the meeting. The researcher arranged a time to conduct an interview and to observe my classroom. During the individual interview, the researcher asked questions, took notes, and recorded my responses. Next, she visited my classroom to observe my teaching of young adolescents. After the observation, I gave the researcher educational materials including the mission statement, curriculum guides, and instructional plans.

University Faculty Member: I met the researcher at a university meeting and learned about the study. I was given an Informed Consent letter that described the study and my role as participant. I agreed to be a participant, signed the Informed Consent letter, and returned it to the researcher at the end of the meeting. The researcher arranged a time to interview me and observe my teaching. During the individual interview, the researcher asked questions, took notes, and recorded my responses. Next, she observed one of my class sessions to observe my teaching of teacher candidates. After the observation, I gave the researcher educational materials including the university's mission statement, conceptual framework, program of study, and course syllabi.

VII. Potential Risks and Safeguards

The potential risk of this study is the possible loss of confidentiality for teachers educators. To safeguard the possible loss of confidentiality, all names will be removed from the data and a pseudonym will be given. Teacher educators will be allowed to review and amend their individual data (i.e., interview responses, observation notes). They will also be allowed to have their individual data removed from the study at any time without repercussions.

VIII. Potential Benefits

While this study does not afford the participants with direct benefit, participants may find it beneficial to have the opportunity to share their insights about middle grades education. The study does have the potential to benefit the Graduate School of Education and Portland State University by identifying policies, programs, and practices that advance effective middle grades education. This would potentially benefit faculty, students, and the educational community, and serve as the basis for informed decision-making regarding the development of policies, programs, and practices in the Graduate School of Education. Further, this study may provide valuable information to teacher educators who guide the education and professional development of teacher candidates (i.e., preservice teachers) and teachers (i.e., inservice teachers).

IX. Confidentiality, Records & Distribution

All interview and observation data, audio-recordings, field notes, and artifacts will be kept confidential. To maintain confidentiality, the interviews, audio-recordings, and field notes will be coded and only the researcher will have access to the code list. When information from this study is shared in presentations or publications, pseudonym will be used to protect participants' identity.

The interview and observation data, audiotapes, field notes, and artifacts will be secured in the researcher's offices and on a password-protected computer, which is backed-up on a secure PSU server. All data and records from this project will be kept on file in the researcher's offices for a minimum of three years.

Results from the study will be (a) shared with participants, (b) presented at national conferences and Graduate School of Education meetings, and (c) developed into manuscripts for inclusion in professional publications (e.g., articles, chapters). Participant confidentiality will be maintained throughout.

X. Appendices

See Appendix A for the Informed Consent and Appendix B for the Individual Interview Questions.

Appendix A

An Exploration of Policies, Programs, and Practices in Middle Grades Education

Informed Consent

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Micki M. Caskey from Portland State University, Graduate School of Education. The researcher intends to explore middle grades education in your county. Middle grades education includes grades 5-9 and serves young adolescents—10-15 year-olds. This study is being conducted to explore the policies, programs, and practices used by teacher educators in New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and the United States. For this study, teacher educators include university faculty, principals, and mentor teachers who guide the education of teacher candidates (i.e., preservice teachers) and professional development of teachers (i.e., inservice teachers). You were selected as a participant in this study because of your role in middle grades education.

If you decide to participate, you can choose the type and amount of participation. The options include: (a) participating in an individual interview, (b) allowing the researcher to observe school activities (e.g., classroom sessions, faculty and/or team meetings, and the like) and/or (c) sharing educational materials (e.g., policy handbooks, programs of study, teaching schedules, curriculum frameworks, course syllabi, newsletters or other informational documents, school improvement plans, and the like).

The time commitment for participation varies.

- An interview will take 20-30 minutes and will be arranged to fit your schedule. The interview will be conducted at your institution in a convenient and private space. The researcher will take notes and audio-record the interview. You will be given an opportunity to review and amend the researcher's field notes and transcripts from the audio-recording.
- The observation time will vary depending on the activity (i.e., class session or meeting schedule). Class session observations will range from 15-60 minutes; meeting observations will range from 30-90 minutes. You will be given an opportunity to review and amend the researcher's field notes.
- The sharing of educational materials will involve providing copies of the institution's artifacts to the researcher.

Though you will not receive any direct benefit from taking part in this study, your participation in the study will increase what is known about the policies, programs, and practices in middle grades education

Information obtained during this study will be kept confidential. To maintain confidentiality, the interviews, audio-recordings, and field notes will be coded and only the researcher will have access to the code list. Data will be secured in the researcher's offices and on a password-protected computer, which is backed-up on a secure university

server. When information from this study is shared in presentations or publications, a pseudonym will be used to protect your identity.

Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to take part in this study, and it will not affect your relationship with Micki Caskey or other participants. You may withdraw from this study at any time without affecting your relationship with the researcher or others.

If you have concerns or problems about your participation in this study or your rights as a research participant, please contact the Human Subjects Research Review Committee at Research and Strategic Partnerships, 1600 SW Fourth Ave., Market Center Building-6th floor, Portland, OR 97201 or by telephone at 503-725-4288. If you have questions about the study, please contact Micki M. Caskey by email at caskeym@pdx.edu or telephone at 503-725-4749.

Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the above information and agree to take part in this study. Please understand that you may withdraw your consent at any time without penalty, and that, by signing, you are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.

Signature

Date

School or University

Email (optional)

Appendix B

An Exploration of Policies, Programs, and Practices in Middle Grades Education

Individual Interview

These items will be used to guide the individual interviews; however, participant responses may prompt the need for additional follow-up questions.

1. What are the critical issues in middle grades education?
2. Tell me about the educational policies that influence your work as a teacher educator.
3. How would you change existing policies to benefit your students?
4. Describe the educational programs that support the middle grades teachers.
5. What educational programs support the development of young adolescents?
6. Describe the teaching practices of middle grades teachers.
7. How have teaching practices in middle grades schools changed in recent years?
8. Why did you become a middle grades teacher educator?
9. What inspires you in middle grades education? Who inspires you in middle grades education?
10. Please tell me what else you think I should know about middle grades education in your country.